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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 001840

SIPDIS

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/WATERS

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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IS](#) [KDEM](#)
SUBJECT: ABU DIS: MAYOR ASK FOR USG HELP ON THE ROUTE OF
THE SEPARATION BARRIER

REF: JERUSALEM 01380

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Thomas Duffy, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In separate August 27 and 28 meetings, the Mayor of Abu Dis, Ibrahim Jaffal, and Abu Dis's lawyer, Shlomo Lecker, requested USG assistance to encourage Israel to reconsider the route of the separation barrier around the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim. This is part of the barrier is intended to connect Ma'ale Adumim, Almon, Nofeir Prat, Kfar Adumim and Allon settlements and the E-1 area to East Jerusalem. Jaffal and Lecker said the planned route cuts the town of Abu Dis from its land and divides the West Bank into northern and southern segments. Lecker said Israeli MoD Barak must respond to the Israeli High Court by September 21 and expressed confidence that the barrier could be constructed in a way that gave Palestinians access to their land while ensuring the security of Israeli settlements.

PALESTINIAN TOWN THREATENED
BY ROUTE OF BARRIER

¶2. (C) Abu Dis Mayor Ibrahim Jaffal told PolOff on August 27 that he expects Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak to decide the route of the separation barrier around Abu Dis in the coming two weeks. Jaffal requested USG assistance to persuade Barak to select a route that minimizes the amount of land Abu Dis will lose to the nearby Israeli settlement of Ma'ale Adumim. (Note: Abu Dis is immediately east of Jerusalem and west of Ma'ale Adumim. End note.)

¶3. (C) Jaffal expressed two principal concerns with the planned route of the barrier. First, it will separate Abu Dis from roughly 8000 dunums of the city's vacant land (four dunums equal approximately one acre). Jaffal said Abu Dis has 15,000 permanent residents and 8000 university students living on 4000 dunums of land. The barrier will hem Abu Dis in on the east, leaving the town no room for growth, according to Jaffal. (Note: Abu Dis is bounded by the barrier to the west, by the town of al-Sawahira al-Sharqiya to the south, and by the town of 'Azariya to the north of Abu Dis. End note.)

¶4. (C) Second, Jaffal said, the planned route of the wall cuts more than 20 kilometers into the West Bank, dividing the West Bank into northern and southern areas. Jaffal argued that this division will inhibit development of a viable Palestinian state.

ISRAELI LAWYER DEFENDS ABU DIS

¶5. (C) Jerusalem attorney Shlomo Lecker, who represents Abu

Dis, told PolOff August 28 that the High Court of Justice gave Barak until 21 September to review the planned route of the barrier and that he expects Barak to defend the current route. He encouraged the USG to address Barak directly with questions about the route of the barrier, Ma'ale Adumim's security needs, and Abu Dis's humanitarian needs.

¶6. (C) According to Lecker, Abu Dis residents scaled back their petition to the High Court of Justice. While they originally argued to prevent construction of the barrier, they now argue for an alternate route, according to Lecker and Mayor Jaffal. They said residents would accept the route proposed by the Council for Peace and Security (CPS), which extends 38, vice 24, kilometers and leaves thousands of dunums of land outside the Ma'ale Adumim bloc and accessible to Palestinians.

¶7. (C) Lecker said during the hearings, Danny Tirza, who planned the route of the barrier, said the CPS proposed route would adequately protect Ma'ale Adumim. Lecker added that there were no attacks in this area during the recent Intifada. He noted that the now-vacant settlement of Kedar and the small settlement of New Kedar are included with Ma'ale Adumim inside the planned route of the barrier. Changes to the route of the barrier would leave these areas on the Palestinian side, Lecker said, but adequate arrangements could be made for their security.

DUFFY